

And the Elephants Beckoned

What if the tuskers were only of stucco? Carmel Myers believed in signs and David Griffith, so—

I HOLD no brief for Youth, ebullient, effervescent, vivid, alluring; Youth in its springtime freshness—Youth that so lightly scoffs at Age. I hold none, for none is needed: Youth is its own brief, its own argument.

I but introduce you to—Youth!

Its name is Carmel Myers.

Going back into ancient history for such a topic as this—three or four days at the least: Jack Conway, the director, and I were discussing the popularity of a seventeen-year-old film star whose name and face are known to the four quarters of the globe.

“Why is it?” I asked. “What does it? There are dozens who can act as well—”

“Thousands, you mean,” he said. “But I’d give my right arm to direct that girl. She’s got all I ask—a plastic body and mind, eyes that talk to you, and more—youth, the only quality that will stand the acid test of the close-up.”

And Miss Carmel, reverting to her, intends to make the most of that youth.

In emerald-and-gold Hollywood she lives in a big house that everybody and his little brother in Los Angeles know as the home of Rabbi Isidore Myers. He is, so there will be no mistake, Miss Carmel’s father, and I’ll venture there’s no cleric in the wide world so immensely proud of his daughter and her rise to success as this same veteran Jewish teacher, lecturer and writer of the Pacific Coast.

But it was to her mother, jovially rotund and frankly pleased with her seventeen years of daughter Carmel, that I put the question of parental opposition to or encouragement of a stage career. Frankly, Mother Myers paid more attention to me than Daughter Myers. Carmel sat in a window-seat and knitted something for the soldiers. She has “adopted” a number of army boys at Camp Kearney, and between scenes she makes them things to eat and wear.

“Oppose Carmel in her career?” asked Mrs.

Although Carmel Myers swore (the verb is her own) she’d never thedabara, the puppy is, you will note, thoroughly vamped.



At the age of one year, Carmel registered Youth into the camera and has been doing it ever since.

"Come On! Come On!"

By Verne Hardin Porter

Myers; "certainly not! Although I prophesied it when she was two years old, I had no particular desire for her to become an actress, but I believe that talent, once shown, should be encouraged and fostered. But if Carmel can't go to the top, I'd rather she'd have gone into the profession of washing dishes or some such thing. If she can't be the best, I want her to quit."

Carmel smiled. "Me too," she said.

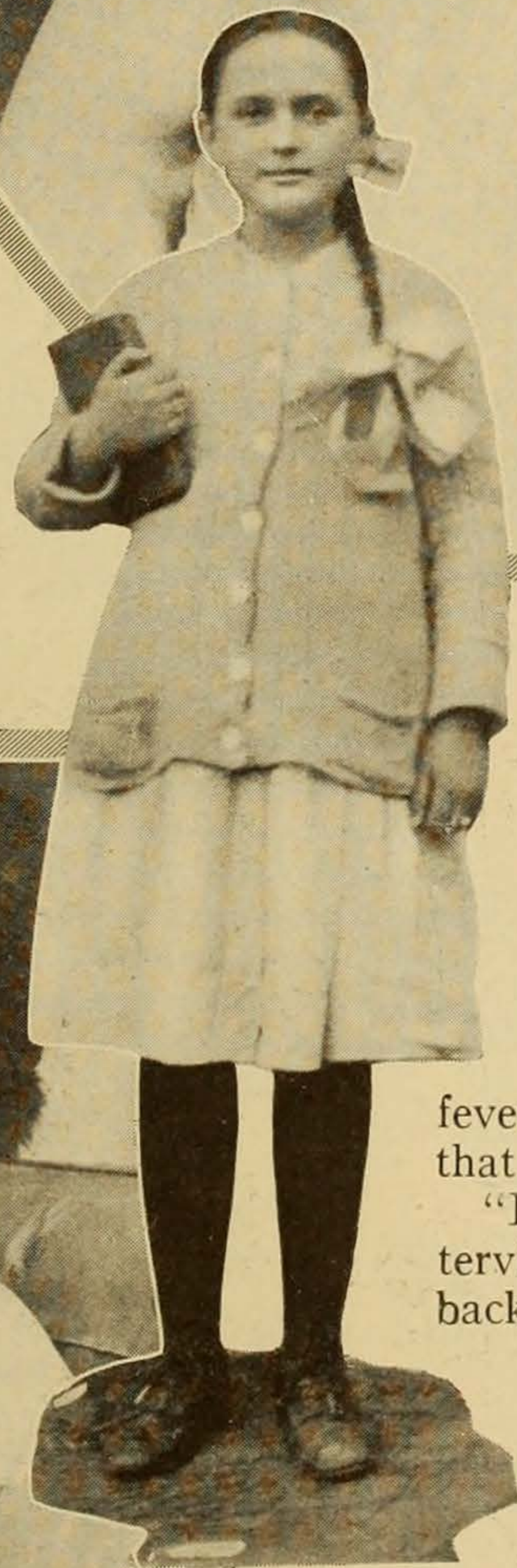
Miss Myers was born in San Francisco seventeen years ago, as has been recorded, and going with her family to Los Angeles, was snatched out of high school during her first year there to become a film actress.

As a child she was a leading lady with trimmings. "She acted all over the house," Mrs. Myers bubbled, chuckling; "upstairs and down and principally in the basement,—admission, one pin. She scorned any other part but that of the leading lady, and her reward of merit was tears from her audiences of little girls. When they cried she knew she'd made a tremendous hit. She would come to me all a-flutter with pride, and say, 'Mother, I made 'em cwy.' She thought it was rather wonderful that they should really exude a few tears, and so did I; but I was never quite sure whether they cried because her performances were good or a w f u l . I know t h e y w e r e a l w a y s s a d p l a y s ; Carmel used to worry me

Shades of pigtails and gingham! Who'd-a thunk it? Carmel emphasizes the fact that this picture was taken in 1909. Which proves that some ducklings really do become swans. Cheer up, girls!



Do you notice that Norma Talmadge droop to the mouth?

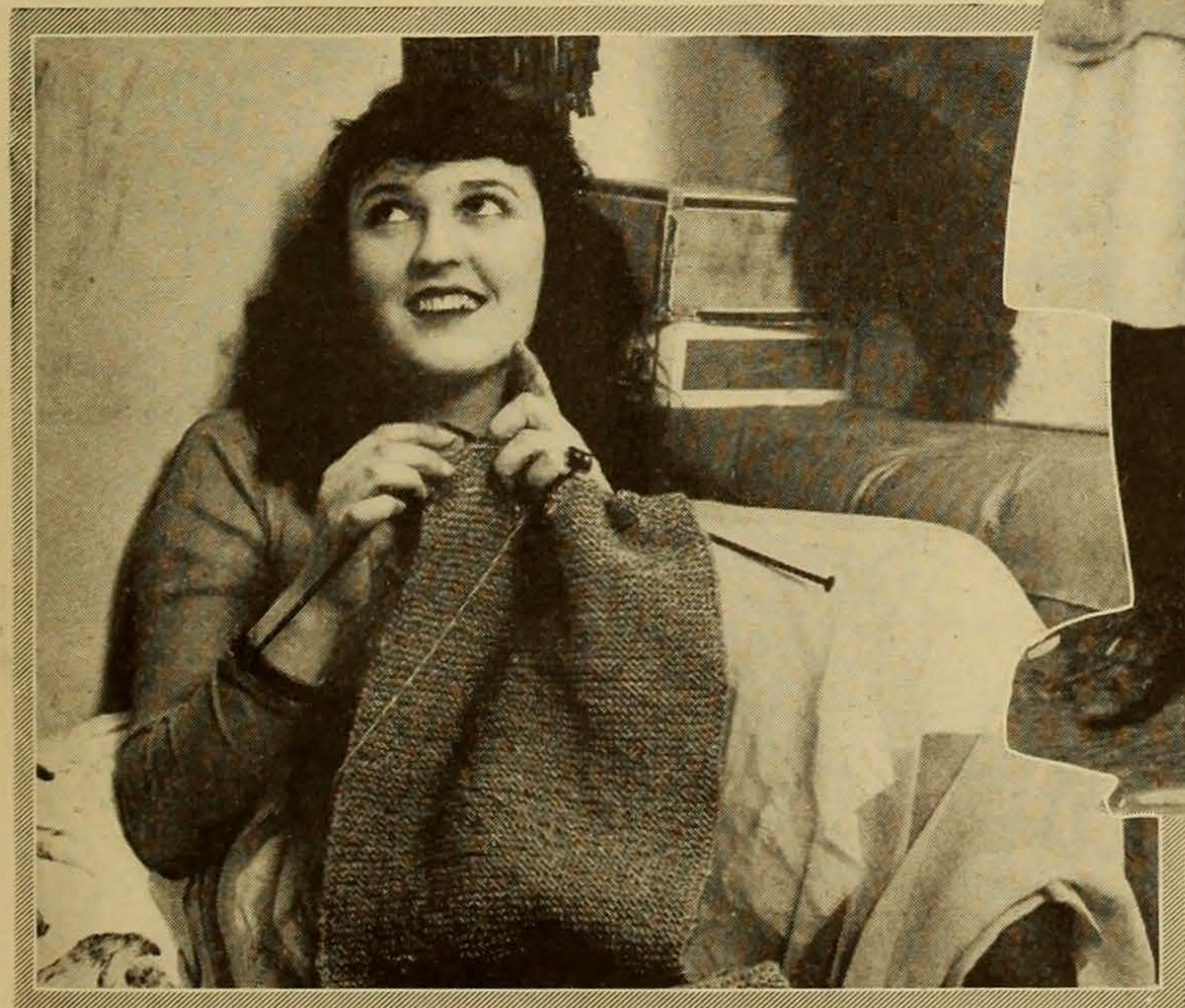


trying to get me to suggest new material. She wanted nothing but tragedy."

"I had always wanted to go on the stage," explained Miss Carmel, now bending her dark head over her knitting to correct a dropped stitch; "But it seemed such a big jump from high school. Motion pictures were all around us here in Hollywood, and the first thing I knew I had the movie fever. And my chance came so unexpectedly that there's really nothing romantic about it.

"David W. Griffith had come to Dad and interviewed him concerning some of the historical background for 'Intolerance.' One day when I was with Dad I met Mr. Griffith. I had been passing the 'Intolerance' 'sets'—the walls of Babylon and all that,—almost every day on my way to and from school, and I had taken particular notice of the two stucco or papier mache figures of elephants with their trunks curled up.

"They—those elephants—always seem to be beckoning me,' I told Mr. Griffith, 'saying, 'Come on! Come on!'"



Merely attesting that she is doing "her bit." And there are hosts of Sammies to verify that statement.

(Continued on page 116)

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"And the Elephants Beckoned"

(Continued from page 33)

me a place in his stock company, his proviso being that I be willing to play what is called 'atmosphere'—mobs and such, you know—for at least two years. Willing? I was simply choking with tears of gladness when I accepted. And that was just a year and a half ago."

Luck, though, comes in streaks. Griffith left almost immediately for the East to take up the exploitation of "Intolerance," and for two months his new recruit to whom the monster elephants had beckoned did little more exciting than play small—very small—parts and attend the studio school. Think of it!—a leading lady in embryo forced to conjugate Latin verbs and trace down the elusive *x* through mazes of *ys* and *zs*!

But then—! It was a small part, her first, in "The Heiress of Coffee Dan's," with Bessie Love in the leading role. By the rules of the plot, Miss Bessie made her exit from Coffee Dan's and a new waitress, a tough cookie, as it were, gum-chewing and sarcastic, took her place. This was Miss Carmel. And Miss Carmel, with years of dramatic training before audiences of tearfully sympathetic playmates behind her, added—with the camera grinding and the director shouting—her own exclusive bit of business to the scene.

She pulled her gum!

She giggled when she told me. "I pulled it, then let it fly back," she said, "wondering all the time if the director would discharge me for doing it. When I heard they let the scene run a few feet longer in the finished picture than they had intended, just to get in that gum-pulling, I nearly cried from joy. Up to that time I had been doing most of my crying on the other side of my face, and telling Mamma that 'Nobody wants me. I'm no good. I'll never, never, never be an actress!' Those two or three feet extra on the film, each foot representing just a second in time to the audience, gave me my great encouragement.

"Then, of a sudden, three directors came for my services, all about at the same time. I begged and pleaded to work in all three pictures, and at last they consented. For a week and a half I worked night and day. And in one of them I was the leading lady, playing opposite Wilfred Lucas in 'A Love Sublime.' All of the time the three directors were squabbling over me.

"After that I was co-starred with Elmo Lincoln in a comedy-drama, 'Might and Man,' and then was told that I was to be featured. For a few days I lived in the clouds. Then the studio closed down.

"I went with Harold Lockwood and played the leading woman's part in 'The Haunted Pajamas,' and that gave me my first big salary boost. So when I went with Universal a year ago I went as a star. They hailed me as the 'baby vamp of the screen.' I resisted strenuously being compelled to specialize in vampire parts, and finally swore I wouldn't be a

vampire no matter what. Luck was with me after the first picture. They couldn't get a vampire story to fit me, and cast me in a comedy-drama, 'The Unmarried Wife.' I succeeded in that, and I've been doing comedy-drama ever since. I'm in it to stay.

* * * * *

"And just the other day came the crowning event in my career. Mr. Griffith sent for me—actually sent for me and offered me a part. I thought the Universal would lend me to him for a picture or two, but—

"Anyway, I was at home, wearing a house-dress and with my hair flying loose in curls, when the telephone message from the Griffith studio came. I didn't stop to change my dress; I didn't stop to put up my hair; I didn't run, I flew the few blocks between the studio and our home. I must have looked about twelve years old—and when I arrived I found that Mr. Griffith wanted me for a twenty-year-old vampire part.

"'Child,' he said, 'you looked ten years older the last time I saw you. What's your recipe?'

"'Well,' I replied, really too frightened to talk, 'I'm much older than I look, and I can look older than I am.'

"I skinned my hair back and showed him. He gave me the part and we rehearsed three days. At the end of that time I got word from the Universal to start to work on one of their pictures.

"I wanted to work under him so badly that I did what I've almost gotten over doing—I cried. He said it reminded him of when I first went with him, and the first time I was called upon to cry before the camera. 'Cry,' the director told me. I tried and tried and tried, thought of everything sad in the world, screwed up my face, bit my lip, pinched myself—and not a tear would come. The director coaxed and cajoled. No tears! I was frantic, almost in hysterics. I ran to Mother and threw my arms around her. 'Mamma, I just *can't* cry,' I told her—and began to cry!

"'Run—quick!' she directed. 'Get in front of the camera before you stop!'

"I did, and I've cried quite successfully upon demand ever since."

* * * * *

Miss Carmel has another, what she considers a still greater, ambition. It is to go on the speaking stage.

"I want to do things heavily dramatic," she says, "like Nazimova. But I won't leave the pictures until I have made a great name for myself. I'll not do things by halves."

Which, after all, is no small-sized job for a winsome little girl who is a star and a schoolgirl too—for every night Miss Carmel marches home from the studio, proceeds to her father's study, and there, with him as her tutor, continues to mull over the three R's. That *does* rather take the kick out of the romance of it all, doesn't it?

SOME directors believe that all dashing young bloods go around in soup and fish, and plug hats from cockcrow to robin's roost.